

South Tahoe's children's memorial no longer in the dark

By Candice Williams

It was a dark, cold winter night in February 1991, when a vehicle carrying five teenage boys hit a patch of black ice, spun out and crashed into a tree on Pioneer Trail. Three of the young men perished in the accident. Their names are Rory Hrbacek, Sandy Haynes and Casey Wells.

Out of her heartache, a young mother, Sue Hrbacek, the mother of Rory Hrbacek, began a personal crusade in the name of her young son and the other two boys to have a guardrail installed and 13 trees removed, including the tree that ended the lives of the three young men. Never again would that tree bring pain and suffering to another family in our town.



South Lake
Tahoe
Children's
Memorial now
has lights.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Instead of having the largest tree destroyed, her dream was to turn the object of her grief into a perpetual memorial to her

son, his two friends and all children of our community who have passed away far too early.

In October 1994, Hrbacek's dream became a reality when the city of South Lake Tahoe offered the serene setting along Highway 50 and Wildwood Avenue where the memorial log was erected. Out of pain and tears came a ministry of healing and peace.

The memorial began with 36 names engraved on brass plates and, sadly, has grown to 223 names. It began as a way to remember our local children, but has expanded to include the memory of children from at least 14 other states and four foreign countries.

Recently, "night lights" were installed to cast a soft glow of light onto the memorial after dark. The vision came about from another mother's memory of how her son always reminded her to leave a light on at night so he would not be afraid of the dark. It is her wish that all the children represented on that memorial be at rest with the light on.

The family of Charles "Chip" Allen Williams would like to thank the city of South Lake Tahoe and the Parks and Recreation Department for, again, opening its heart and sense of community to help another family realize a vision to help all families heal through their valley of grief.

At 2pm on July 25, there will be a Dedication of Light at the site of the Children's Memorial. All are welcome to attend.

For more information, contact Candice Williams at (530) 542.2733.